



Rhode Island Department of Health

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New COVID-19 Response Measures Announced for Rhode Island

Governor Gina M. Raimondo, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and the Rhode Island Department of Administration (DOA) announced today a set of broad measures to help limit or prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Rhode Island.

“All of the COVID-19 cases in Rhode Island at this point are associated with one trip to Italy. However, because this is an evolving global public health situation, we are putting in place a number of additional preparedness and response initiatives,” said Governor Raimondo. “We are taking extensive measures to ensure the health and safety of all Rhode Islanders.”

At a press event this morning, the following response measures were announced by Governor Raimondo and Director of Health Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH:

- **Workplace Policy:** To help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19, all State employees who have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan in the last 14 days and going forward are being instructed to remain at home until 14 symptom-free days have passed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has placed [Travel Health Notices](#) on these countries because they are experiencing sustained or community transmission of COVID-19. (Following federal guidance, all travelers from China are already self-quarantining for 14 days and are self-monitoring for symptoms with public health supervision. Starting today, federal guidance is expanding to include Iran in this program.) State employees who have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan are being directed to contact RIDOH.
- To help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19, RIDOH is encouraging employers throughout Rhode Island to, if possible, ask employees who have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan in the last 14 days and going

forward to remain at home until 14 symptom-free days have passed since their return to the US.

- **Enhanced response:** To ensure that RIDOH is coordinating as closely as possible with CDC officials managing the COVID-19 response at the national level, a five-person team from the CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) has been embedded at RIDOH. EIS is a long-standing, globally recognized fellowship program, renowned for its investigative and emergency response efforts. This unique opportunity will help CDC understand the unique needs of Rhode Islander and bolster the State's response efforts.
- **Visitation policies:** To help protect the public, RIDOH has worked with healthcare facility partners to develop a policy to limit visitors in hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. This policy restricts people from visiting staff or patients if they are younger than 18 years of age or if they are sick. The policy also includes steps and guidance for further limiting visitation, should that become necessary. RIDOH has developed posters to help facilities communicate about this policy.
- **Testing:** We are utilizing multiple options for places people can go for specimen collection if they need to be tested, including non-healthcare settings. RIDOH will direct people to these locations for specimen collection as needed. Samples will be sent to the RIDOH State Health Laboratories for testing.
- **Public Information:** To keep the public as informed as possible, RIDOH has established a dedicated COVID-19 Hotline to answer general questions about COVID-19. That number is 401-222-8022. After 4:30 p.m., anyone with questions about COVID-19 should call 211. Additionally, people can write to RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov or visit www.health.ri.gov/covid

Data updates

- Number of Rhode Island COVID-19 positive (including presumptive positive) cases: 2
This number does not include a Massachusetts resident who the Massachusetts Department of Public Health reported as having a presumptive positive test result. This individual went on the Saint Raphael Academy trip to Italy in mid-February.
- Number of people who had negative test results at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories: 17
- Number of people for whom tests are pending: 8
- Number of people who are currently instructed to self-quarantine in Rhode Island because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19:

approximately 200 (RIDOH is sharing an approximate number because this number is subject to change regularly)

Testing in Rhode Island is being done at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories. Confirmatory testing is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Positive results are considered 'presumptive' if they still need to be confirmed by the CDC.

Key messages for the public

- **Although Rhode Island has the testing capacity it needs, people without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.**
- If you were with someone who does not have symptoms, the risk of transmission is very low.
- There are many respiratory illnesses circulating in Rhode Island, such as the flu and the common cold. Having respiratory symptoms does not mean that you have COVID-19.
- People are at higher risk for COVID-19 if they have symptoms of the virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) AND if they were a contact of a positive case of COVID-19 (or have traveled to country with community transmission, such as China, Italy, South Korea, Iran, and Japan).
- Someone is considered a contact if they have had direct, face-to-face contact with a person with COVID-19.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency).
- People with general questions about COVID-19 can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public.
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
 - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.
 - Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.